



Loreto Sixth Form College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Better
education
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Inspection report

Audience Post-sixteen	Published May 2006	Provider reference 130503
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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Loreto Sixth Form College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Ann Clynch
Address of college:	Chichester Road South Manchester M15 5PB
Telephone number:	0161 226 5156
Fax number:	0161 227 9174
Chair of governors:	Mike Sedgwick
Unique reference number:	130503
Name of lead inspector:	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins, HMI
Dates of inspection:	13 – 17 March 2006

Background of the organisation

1. Loreto College is a Roman Catholic sixth form college located just over one mile south of the centre of Manchester. It is one of an international network of Catholic colleges run by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM). The college is situated between the wards of Hulme and Moss Side, two of the most deprived areas in the country. The unemployment rates in Moss Side and Hulme are at least twice the average of the city of Manchester. According to the 2004 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Manchester itself is ranked as the second most deprived local authority in the United Kingdom. Most of the student population is drawn from the Manchester local education authority and surrounding authorities. Around 20% of Loreto's total cohort of students is drawn from a two mile radius.
2. The college offers an extensive range of GCE A and AS level subjects. A smaller range of vocational courses is offered from entry level to level 3. The college offers programmes in 10 of the 15 subject sector categories. In 2005/6 there were 1,589 learners enrolled on courses, of which most were aged 16 to 18. Some 37% of the student population are from minority ethnic groups, slightly higher than that of Manchester as a whole. The ratio of Catholics to non-Catholics in the student population is 2:1. Since the last inspection the college has withdrawn its small adult provision.
3. The college cites a clear commitment to the founder's core values of justice, freedom, sincerity, truth and joy. The mission of the College is to 'respond to the educational needs of young people from its partnership high schools and special schools in Manchester and surrounding areas, and to guide these learners to success by challenging them to achieve academic and human excellence and by supporting them in the pursuit of this excellence. In addition the college aims 'to be proactive in identifying and responding to the needs of other learners from the Catholic, local and wider communities where they are consonant with the college's core values'.

Scope of the inspection

4. In deciding the scope of this inspection, inspectors took account of: the college's previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk); the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans; comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC); and data on enrolments and learners' achievements over the period since the last inspection. This inspection focused on the following aspects:
 - overall effectiveness of the college and its capacity to improve further
 - achievements and standards
 - quality of provision
 - leadership and management

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: grade 1
Achievements and standards	Outstanding: grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: grade 1

Note: Where contributory grades have been awarded, they are shown in the relevant sections of the report. Contributory grades represent the judgement of the team that the quality of the aspect of provision indicated by the grade differs from the grade overall.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

5. The college has high expectations of all its learners. Challenging targets for improvement are set and regularly met or exceeded. The principal provides inspirational strategic leadership. Management is outstanding and ensures that the college's mission and its core values permeate all college life. A strong culture of respect is adhered to by learners of all faiths and backgrounds. The commitment to the college ethos and core values by trustees, governors, managers, staff and learners is outstanding. Quality assurance arrangements are rigorous and lead to improvement. Self-assessment is accurate. Accommodation and specialist resources are of a high standard and provide a safe environment. Opportunities for spiritual, moral and social development are outstanding.
6. Achievements and standards are outstanding. Most success and pass rates are high and improving. Retention rates on a small minority of courses remain low. The progress made by learners in relation to their GCSE scores is excellent. Learners enjoy their studies and their behaviour in lessons and around the college is exemplary. Too many learners' punctuality at the start of lessons is unsatisfactory. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that teaching and learning are outstanding. Learners clearly enjoy their lessons and are enthusiastic about all their courses. There is very good use of Information and Learning Technologies (ILT) by staff and students to promote learning.
7. The college's approach to social and educational inclusion is outstanding. The college recruits substantial numbers of learners from areas of high deprivation. There are very effective support mechanisms for all learners, both academic and pastoral. The curriculum meets learners' needs. Extensive links with partner schools provide appropriate routes of study at levels 1 or 2. There are highly effective partnership arrangements with local schools and the Catholic community. Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and has grown since the last inspection. The college's commitment to equality of opportunity is strong. An exceptionally full and varied range of enrichment activities is well attended. Support for learners is outstanding. The college ethos of tolerance and respect for others is well established and embedded through a varied programme of tutorial activities.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: grade 1

8. The college demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve the high quality of its provision. Most learners achieve significantly higher grades than those predicted based on their GCSE performance. Support for learners continues to be outstanding. Quality assurance arrangements have been highly effective in securing improvements. The self-assessment process is rigorous and findings are accurate. Robust information systems are used to analyse trends in performance and improvement targets are closely monitored. Growth has been well managed and the quality of accommodation is now high following a major building programme.

The effectiveness of the steps taken by the college to promote improvement since the last inspection

9. The college has made outstanding progress in addressing the areas for improvement noted in the last inspection. The new accommodation has significantly improved access for students with restricted mobility and the use of ILT in teaching is now good or better. The college has used a variety of strategies to strengthen the provision at levels 1 and 2 and has been very successful in working within several schools to develop their GCSE and vocational curriculum. Pass rates have improved year on year at all levels. However, since the last inspection, retention on a small number of courses has continued to be below college expectations.

Key strengths of the college

Strengths

- Outstanding commitment to the college ethos and core values
- High pass and success rates
- Excellent progress made by most learners
- Good and outstanding teaching
- Good use of ILT by staff and students to promote learning
- Highly effective partnership arrangements with local schools and the Catholic community
- Extensive programme of enrichment
- Excellent support for learners
- Inspirational leadership and outstanding management
- Outstanding social and educational inclusion
- High standard of accommodation and specialist resources

Areas for improvement

The college should address:

- Low retention rates on a minority of courses
- Learners' punctuality at the start of lessons

Main findings

Achievements and standards

Outstanding: grade 1

10. The college sets challenging targets for, and has high expectations of all their learners. Success rates are high. For the last three years success rates for level 1 and level 3 courses have remained above the national average. In 2004/05, the overall success rate for advanced courses improved to 82%, which is significantly higher than similar colleges. For learners studying level 2 courses the success rate also improved to above average. Success rates on advanced vocational courses are very high, rising consistently since 2002. The small number of learners aged 19 or over achieve well.
11. In 2005 the pass rate for advanced courses was high at 94%. Pass rates on AS and GCE A-level courses remained above the national average for the fourth consecutive year. In 2004/05, 28 out of 35 subjects at GCE A-level and 11 out of 31 subjects at AS-level achieved 100% pass rates. In the same year, all learners studying GNVQ intermediate courses passed their qualifications. The overall GCSE pass rate at grades A*-G improved to 96%. At advanced level, most retention rates remain broadly in line with similar colleges. Retention remains low on a small minority of these courses. Retention rates on level 2 courses improved to around the national average.
12. The progress made by learners in relation to their GCSE scores is outstanding. Progress is particularly significant on GCE A and AS-level mathematics, government and politics and the AVCE in ICT. In GCSE mathematics a high proportion of learners achieve grades A*-C. Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve very well. The college's self-assessment analyses the performance by different groups of learners in detail. It accurately recognises retention issues for particular courses and has appropriate plans in place to address them.
13. The standard of learners' work is high. They develop good research skills. The college actively celebrate all learners' achievements, from academic to recreational pursuits. Opportunities for spiritual, moral and social development are outstanding. Attendance across the college has improved to 88%. However, too many learners arrive late at the start of their lessons and this is disruptive to others. The proportion of learners applying successfully to higher education is good.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: grade 1

14. Inspectors agree with the college's self-assessment that teaching and learning are outstanding. Learners clearly enjoy their lessons and are enthusiastic about all their courses. Learners make very good progress in developing their

- knowledge and skills, and use relevant technical language in discussions and debates. Teachers display high levels of knowledge and use appropriate examples to stimulate learners' interest. Questioning techniques are used effectively to check their understanding and to clarify key points. Learners respond well to the high level of challenge in lessons. Teachers use a wide range of strategies and activities successfully to make sure the differing needs of all learners are met. In a few sessions where teaching is less effective, learners are passive and the teacher takes too dominant a role.
15. There is very good use of ILT across all subjects. Interactive whiteboards are used well and there is effective integration of video clips and presentations. Learners are very positive about the learning materials they can access on the college intranet, for extending their studies and catching up on missed work. There is a great deal of information relating to learners on the intranet which teachers use well to support individuals in their studies and to plan lessons to meet their needs.
 16. A thorough system of internal lesson observations is in place. Joint observations carried out by inspectors and internal observers showed close agreement about all aspects of the lessons observed. The outcomes of lesson observations are used effectively to inform training, for example those covering the sharing of good practice and areas for development. The teaching and learning officer leads the development of teaching and learning and drives the learning styles agenda effectively.
 17. The college has good arrangements for the quality assurance of assessment processes. Work is regularly set and marked, with helpful comments and guidance that help learners to improve their performance. Learners are all aware of their target grades and how to achieve them or, in many cases surpass them. Learners have regular progress reviews and online reviews have recently been successfully piloted. Learners' parents are kept well informed of their progress.
 18. The college collects information about learners' additional learning needs from a wide variety of sources pre-entry, to support a smooth transition onto their college studies. On arrival at college an initial assessment is carried out to ensure any needs not already known are identified. Once identified, appropriate support is provided straight away and effectively monitored.
 19. Highly productive links exist with partnership high schools, other providers and the wider Catholic community. The college plays a constructive role in 14-19 collaboration through its contribution to the Manchester Catholic Education Partnership (MANCEP). This work has helped to extend vocational education and raise pupils' aspirations.
 20. The range of curriculum provision to meet learners' needs and interests is outstanding. The choice of GCE A and AS level subjects is extensive and vocational programmes are offered at three levels. Provision for learners with

special needs has grown since the last inspection and remains good. Recent improvements to key skills include the dissemination of useful guidance for staff. Key skills pass rates improved significantly in 2004/05. The range of enrichment activities, including some co-ordinated by the chaplaincy team, is exceptionally full and varied. Learners value these opportunities to develop their interests and participation rates are high. Cultural, intellectual, artistic and sporting activities are provided along with work experience. Many learners undertake voluntary work or contribute to the community in other ways. The student council regularly presents learners' views to the principal.

21. The college fulfils legal requirements relating to collective worship and religious education. Opportunities for worship include daily prayers, a lunch time mass and retreats. Prayer rooms are provided for Muslims. Learners directly influence the moral and spiritual content of the weekly assemblies which foster a positive sense of identity and community. High success rates are achieved by learners on the externally validated religious education course.
22. Support for learners is outstanding. The provision of learner support is comprehensive, highly effective and well organised. Induction arrangements are very thorough. They include introduction of the 'Code of Respect' which helps to establish the college ethos of tolerance and respect for others. Learners' conduct and behaviour in college is consistent with this ethos. The work of the social inclusion officer directly benefits many learners by building their confidence and raising aspirations. Most learners who receive support achieve higher grades than their predicted targets.
23. The tutorial curriculum is carefully designed to meet learners' needs. Topics include identity fraud and bullying. Child protection procedures are comprehensive. Communication between personal tutors and subject teachers is good. Arrangements to monitor attendance are effective. Access to external support services is good. Learners receive comprehensive guidance about future careers and their applications to higher education. The overall effectiveness of learner support is systematically evaluated.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: grade 1

24. Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal provides inspirational strategic leadership and the commitment of trustees and governors to the mission and Catholic ethos is outstanding. Very effective management ensures that the mission is clearly understood and underpins all policies and strategies. Managers give clear direction and they have high levels of accountability. Staff are very well supported and they receive good professional development. The 47% growth in learners aged 16 to 18 since the last inspection has been well managed. A culture aimed at raising the aspirations and obtaining the best possible success for all learners is evident throughout the college. Students respond well within this culture and it

encourages them to learn. The overall retention rate on advanced level courses has remained in line with averages for sixth form colleges. The college continues to improve the high success rates. In November 2005, the college was awarded the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize to recognise excellence in raising aspiration and achievement in an urban context.

25. Quality assurance arrangements are rigorous and bring about improvement. The self-assessment process is well established and thorough. Judgements of strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report are extensively evidenced and accurate, though it is not always easy to determine the salient points. The college has invested significantly in improving management information systems. Performance monitoring is now supported by timely and accurate data and managers ensure improvement targets are achieved within reasonable timescales.
26. The college actively promotes collaboration through effective partnership working. Several successful initiatives involve supporting teachers and pupils within their schools to raise aspirations and achievements at levels 1 and 2.
27. The college's commitment to equality of opportunity is very strong. The college complies fully with the Race Relations Act 2000 and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA) 2001. The college embraces diversity as part of its culture. It goes far beyond the legal requirements to involve staff and students in enthusiastic engagement in a positive, anti-discriminatory environment. The monitoring of equality of opportunity is thorough. Analysis of learners' achievement data by gender, minority ethnic background and learning difficulties or disabilities identifies groups of learners who may be at risk of underperforming.
28. Members of the governing body have a range of expertise they use to good effect in discharging their responsibilities. Their clear strategic view prioritises improvements in learners' experiences and they make effective contributions to the validation of the self-assessment report. Since the last inspection, governors have effectively overseen the re-building of the college, ensuring the new accommodation was completed within budget and to specific timescales. The college's financial management and value for money are outstanding.
29. Accommodation and specialist resources are of a high standard. The college provides a safe and vibrant environment for learners. Several decorative features from the old buildings have been retained. The original college chapel awaits refurbishment, though a temporary small chapel is well used for daily prayer.

Learners' achievements

Table 1

Success rates on mainstream level 1 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
1 Long	02/03	56	75	68	7	17	94	40	54
	03/04	42	81	74	7	15	93	49	44
	04/05	102	77			19	100		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	12	75						
	03/04	7	71						
	04/05	12	83						
NVQs	02/03								
	03/04								
	04/05								
Other	02/03	44	75	68	7	17	94	40	54
	03/04	35	83	73	9	15	93	50	43
	04/05	90	77			18	100		

Table 2

Success rates on mainstream level 2 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
2 Long	02/03	564	63	71	-8	27	41	48	-8
	03/04	372	72	75	-4	19	74	47	27
	04/05	455	80			14	86		
GCSEs	02/03	346	70	73	-3	3	100		
	03/04	284	71	77	-6	3	33		
	04/05	347	80			2	100		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	43	74	69	6				
	03/04	37	65	71	-6				
	04/05	41	83						
NVQs	02/03								
	03/04								
	04/05								
Other	02/03	175	47	62	-15	24	33	41	-8
	03/04	51	78	73	5	16	81	32	49
	04/05	67	75			12	83		

Table 3

Success rates on mainstream level 3 qualifications, by qualification type, expected end year and age, 2003 to 2005, compared to the national rates for colleges of a similar type.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	16-18				19+			
		Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff	Starts – Transfers	College Rate	National Rate	Diff
3 Long	02/03	2,867	79	72	7	54	54	53	1
	03/04	3,467	78	75	3	41	83	58	25
	04/05	3,845	82			55	71		
A/A2 Levels	02/03	860	90	88	2	23	87		
	03/04	1,103	88	89	-1	15	87		
	04/05	1,155	91			26	85		
AS Levels	02/03	1,849	75	66	8	9	89		
	03/04	2,205	74	69	5	3	67		
	04/05	2,523	78			7	100		
GNVQs and precursors	02/03	143	71	63	9	2	50		
	03/04	68	87	68	19	0			
	04/05	83	89			4	100		
NVQs	02/03								
	03/04								
	04/05								
Other	02/03	15	73	54	19	20	0		
	03/04	91	41	57	-16	23	83		
	04/05	84	63			18	33		